

Grabbe's freedom may hinge on mercy

The only way convicted murderer Fred B. Grabbe will be freed from prison — unless he wins his appeal — will be through the mercy of Illinois' governor.

Grabbe, 46, was found guilty June 24 of the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, of Route 1, Marshall.

Fifth Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Komada sentenced Grabbe to life behind bars. Komada's order was received Thursday at the Clark County Courthouse.

Under that sentence, Grabbe will never be eligible for parole but could be released at some indefinite date by executive clemency.

To get that clemency, Grabbe must petition the state's 10-member Prisoner Review Board, which makes recommendations to the governor, who has the ultimate authority.

Since 1977, Gov. James R. Thompson has reviewed 1,174 clemency requests and granted 69, the governor's staff in Springfield said.

No written standards exist to say how the governor decides clemency questions.

David W. Lewis, Clark County state's attorney who prosecuted Grabbe, said "It's really a matter of the governor's own personal judgment."

Lewis said Grabbe should not hope to get out through the governor's mercy. "I don't see any reason at all why the governor would be interested in a case like this."

Lewis said he thinks it unlikely the Prisoner Review Board would take any action at all on a Grabbe petition at least until the courts complete the appeal process.

Grabbe lawyers file appeal notice

MARSHALL, Ill. — Defense attorneys for convicted murderer Fred B. Grabbe filed notice of appeal late Friday in the Clark County circuit clerk's office.

Grabbe, 46, was convicted June 24 of the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, of Route 1, Marshall.

He was sentenced by Judge Paul Komada to life without parole in a sentencing order dated Sept. 11 and received Sept. 12 by the Clark County circuit clerk.

Grabbe had been confined at Danville following an alleged jail-break attempt

July 7 in Clark County jail, but he was transported Tuesday to the John A. Graham Correctional Center to be admitted into the Illinois prison system.

The notice filed Friday by Grabbe's defense attorneys starts the ball rolling toward the 4th District Appellate Court, which eventually will review the Grabbe case. The Appellate Court could order a new trial or reduced sentence — or it could uphold the jurors' finding and Komada's rulings.

No final action is expected by the Appellate Court for eight to 12 months.

Grabbe homes object of arsonist: Sheriff

By John Halladay
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

MARSHALL, Ill. — Reports now being written will say arson was the cause of two rural Marshall house fires last week.

The house in which convicted murderer Fred B. Grabbe lived burned to the ground Wednesday, and so did a nearby house that formerly was the residence of Grabbe's son, Jeff, and Jeff's wife, Cindy.

Clark County Sheriff Dan Crumrin said Monday that in-

vestigative reports will say the two fires were arson because traces of a flammable liquid were found in the basement of Jeff and Cindy's former home, and Fred Grabbe's home had been broken into by someone who cut a door screen and broke glass from the door.

Investigation is continuing, but there are "no suspects at the present time," Crumrin said.

Both houses were "totally involved," with "flames coming out of everywhere" when firefighters arrived shortly after 5 a.m., said Jerry Parsley, a Clark County sheriff's deputy and member of the Marshall Volunteer Fire Depart-

ment.

Fred and Charlotte's two-story house to the south across a bean patch is currently listed in the clerk and recorder's office as being owned by Charlotte.

The ownership of Fred and Charlotte's property has been the subject of continuing civil litigation.

Fred Grabbe, 46, was found guilty June 24 of the July 24, 1981 strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte.

Sentence for that murder has not yet been imposed. Grabbe could be sentenced to from 20 years to life in prison.

Grabbe homes burned to ground

By John Halladay
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

MARSHALL, Ill. — The rural Marshall house in which convicted murderer Fred B. Grabbe formerly lived burned to the ground early Wednesday.

So did the house about 150 yards to the north of it that was formerly the residence of Grabbe's son, Jeff, and Jeff's wife, Cindy.

An investigation into the cause of both fires is under way.

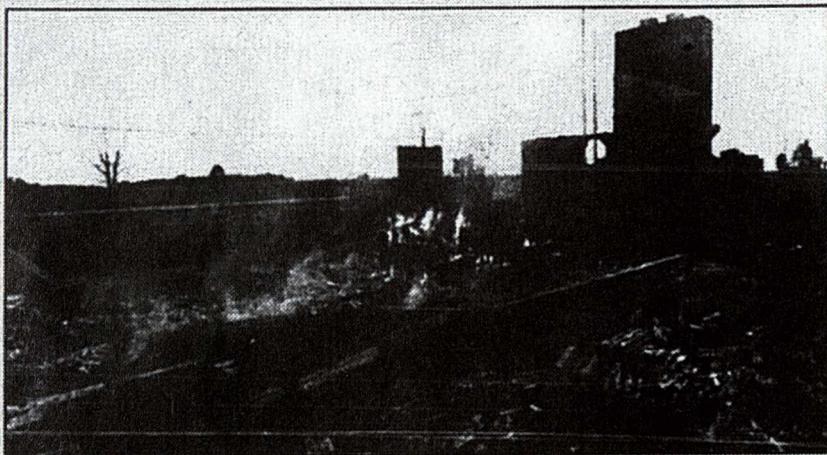
Two special agents of the arson investigation division of the Illinois Fire Marshal's office along with a state police crime scene technician are assisting Clark County Sheriff Dan Crumrin with the investigation.

Earle F. Hefley of the fire marshal's office in Springfield said Wednesday that the investigation is continuing and that the presence of his agents does not necessarily mean the fires were set.

Crumrin said Wednesday investigators are "operating under the assumption" the fires were started by an arsonist but no real determination has been made. The fire scenes are still "too hot to get down into," and it probably will be Monday before investigation can proceed, the sheriff said.

Both houses were "totally involved," with "flames coming out of everywhere" when firefighters arrived shortly after 5 a.m., said Jerry Parsley, a Clark County sheriff's deputy and member of the Marshall Volunteer Fire Department.

Jeff's house "seemed to be more involved" in flame — "It was already through the roof," Parsley said.



Tribune-Star/Bob Poynter

Destroyed: Fred Grabbe's house smolders after being leveled by early morning blaze.

Both houses were vacant, fire officials said.

Bill Rhoads, Marshall fire chief, said there seemed to be no use in going into the structures. "I told them [firefighters] not to enter them [the houses] — just put water on them and try to control them."

Rhoads said two passing truck drivers already had been in the houses to see if anyone was there.

The fire took place while the town water tower was on low pressure so the outside of it could be resurfaced and repainted. Rhoads said, "Water wasn't what caused them to burn completely."

"We still had one tanker and another pumper over here that we

never did take to the scene," Rhoads said later at his Marshall garage.

Rhoads said he did not know if there was any insurance on the properties.

The houses together might have been worth around \$200,000, he said.

Index cards in the county clerk and recorder's office show the single-story house formerly occupied by Jeff and Cindy Grabbe was owned by Casey National Bank. Courthouse documents show the bank became the owner on May 31, 1984, after foreclosing on a first and second mortgage. The bank took the property for \$77,071.86 in

outstanding debt, interest, sale costs and so on.

Figures obtained from the county assessor's office indicate the fair market value on Fred and Charlotte's house was at least \$68,586; and Jeff and Cindy's former house was worth at least \$63,324. These figures may have been low, but "we won't get a chance to adjust them now," said employees in the assessor's office.

Fred and Charlotte's two-story house to the south across a beam patch is currently listed in the clerk and recorder's office as being owned by Charlotte.

The ownership of Fred and

Charlotte's property has been the subject of continuing civil litigation.

Larry B. Jones of Paris, one of Grabbe's defense attorneys, said Wednesday of the fire at Grabbe's home, "It doesn't benefit anybody" because no one knows at this time if Fred or his children will win out in the civil litigation and get control of the property. Jones also said he did not know who, if anyone, had insurance on the property.

Fred Grabbe, 46, was found guilty June 24 of the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte.

Sentence for that murder has not yet been imposed. Grabbe could be sentenced from 20 years to life in prison.

Grabbe disposed of most of his wife's body by burning it after the murder, according to trial testimony.

Fire has been associated with the Grabbe family on several previous occasions.

Ethel Rose Gore, Charlotte's mother and Fred's mother-in-law, died in 1958 in a barn fire south of her Carlisle residence. John L. Alexander, then Sullivan County coroner, declared the death to be accidental.

In a statement to the coroner, Fred Grabbe said he went by the barn about 5:15 a.m. on May 9 and saw no activity. He said he saw the fire 40 to 45 minutes later. "The barn was on fire all over," Grabbe said.

This summer, Fred Grabbe's motorcycle was found ablaze near Grand Turn Road in Clark County. Authorities said they did not know then and do not know now what to make of that July 12 incident.

'Eloquent' order sends Grabbe to jail for life

By John Halladay
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

MARSHALL, Ill. — Fred B. Grabbe should spend the rest of his life behind bars, 5th Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Komada said in a sentencing order that arrived Thursday in the Clark County Courthouse.

Grabbe, 46, was found guilty June 24 of the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, of Route 1, Marshall.

Komada presided at Grabbe's three-week-long trial and said in the sentencing order, "Based upon the evidence, reasonable persons may never fathom the depravity that must exist in the soul of Fred Grabbe."

The evidence was defendant repeatedly strangled Charlotte Grabbe, intermittently easing his grip on her throat, allowing her to gasp for breath, while betting Vickie McCalister (a former Grabbe girlfriend turned star prosecution witness) that Charlotte would die with her eyes closed.

"After Charlotte died, defendant abused the body. Holding the head by the hair, he banged the head against a barrel. Defendant then sodomized the body, noting with apparent satisfaction Charlotte disliked such behavior. Using a grease gun, defendant pumped the body cavities full of grease to facilitate burning. He then calmly ate sardines and crackers, washing them down with a glass of milk.

"After burning the body in a large barrel, defendant removed the skull. He carefully checked the mouth with his finger to ascertain

Safety cited in mailing

Judge Paul Komada said he ruled by mail in the Fred B. Grabbe sentencing for the safety of everyone.

Komada's order arrived Thursday at the Clark County Courthouse.

In that sentencing order, Komada noted that a Clark County jailer was shot and wounded in an apparent attempt by a Grabbe girlfriend to free Grabbe after he was found guilty.

"In light of the numerous threats reported to this court

during the pendency of this case, it would be foolish, indeed, to not consider a threat of danger would exist once sentence is imposed.

"Persons interested in this case, some supportive and others antagonistic to the defendant, are the source of danger the court intended to avoid. Strong feelings expressed by these persons might well lead to explosive and violent reaction to the imposition of a sentence," Komada said.

all teeth that might provide a means of identification were destroyed. After cracking the skull on a tree, he threw the pieces in the Wabash River, saying it would make good fish bait."

Komada said Grabbe's behavior related by McCalister was "so bizarre and outrageous as to shock the sensibilities of reasonable persons. In fact, the behavior seems more like the plot of a horror movie than what might be expected in real life."

The judge also reviewed a large number of other assertions of gruesome behavior by Grabbe, including that "While burning the body, defendant expressed regret that he did not have more time to torture Charlotte before her death; he wanted to have more fun with her, he would have enjoyed hanging her and watching her kick."

Komada said it appeared to him unlikely that Grabbe ever will be

rehabilitated and that a harsh sentence is necessary to deter others from similar crimes.

"This court is of the opinion it is absolutely necessary for the protection of the public that defendant be sentenced to a term of natural life imprisonment."

"I think it was an appropriate sentence," said David W. Lewis, Clark County state's attorney, who prosecuted Grabbe. Lewis termed Komada's five-page order "very eloquent."

Attorney Frederick Cohn of Chicago, who will handle Grabbe's appeal, said the sentence was "inappropriate and excessive."

Defense attorneys for Grabbe said previously an appeal would be filed. Lewis said Thursday his best guess is that an appeals court may rule on the case in eight to 12 months.

See related story, A3

Grabbe charges remain linked

MARSHALL, Ill. — Two charges against accused murderer Fred R. Grabbe will remain linked together, 5th Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Komada ruled Thursday.

Grabbe is accused of the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, Route 1, Marshall.

Ellen Schanzle-Haskins, the assistant Illinois attorney general helping Clark County State's Attorney David W. Lewis prosecute the case, argued Thursday that the murder charge should be split off from a charge that Grabbe tried to get a Clark County Jail inmate to

commit perjury and support Grabbe's contention that star prosecution witness Vickie McCalister was smoking marijuana in the jail after her November arrest.

"They are substantially unrelated acts," Schanzle-Haskins said of the two charges. She also said the prosecution would offer evidence in the murder trial about the alleged perjury try to show "consciousness of guilt" by Grabbe.

"They can't have it both ways," Max Cohen, one of Grabbe's defense attorneys, said.

Prosecutors were trying to split the charges apart so they would

have a backup case of perjury if the murder trial resulted in acquittal, Cohen said.

Schanzle-Haskins also asked that Cohen be disqualified as Grabbe's attorney at the perjury trial because the prosecution plans to call him as a witness.

Cohen said that was just "a ploy," and "I cannot conceive that the people are serious about calling me."

Komada refused to change his mind and kept the two cases linked. He said he was without authority to disqualify Cohen but that prosecutors could resubmit the motion later.

— John Halladay

WORLD CULTURE AT 3 P.M.

WTH resident ordered to testify at upcoming Grabbe murder trial

A West Terre Haute man was ordered and paid Friday to testify as a prosecution witness in the trial of accused murderer Fred B. Grabbe.

Kim Keeler, 98 Paris Ave., was in Vigo Circuit Court as part of proceedings under the Uniform Act to Secure the Attendance of Witnesses.

Grabbe, 45, is accused of the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, Route 1, Marshall.

The trial will be conducted in Danville, Ill., because of pretrial publicity in the Clark County area.

Earlier this week, a Terre Haute woman, Susan Crippen, 2019 N. Eighth St., was in Circuit Court for

the same type of proceedings.

Each was given a check for \$31.80 — \$15 for witness fee and \$16.80 for mileage one way to Danville.

Both the prosecution and defense in the Grabbe trial have agreed to a judicial order not talk to reporters until the trial is over.

Vicki recalls killing

By John Halladay
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

MARSHALL, Ill. — "It seemed like forever, but I guess it was about five minutes or so" as Fred B. Grabbe choked his wife to death, according to a statement by Vickie McCalister, the state's star witness.

Grabbe, 45, is accused of strangling his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, on July 24, 1981. McCalister, 28, 219 N. Ninth St., West Terre Haute, fingered Fred Grabbe as the murderer in a statement Nov. 8, 1984, to Michael Geurin and Larry Coughlin, both Illinois state investigators.

In the statement, McCalister tells of going to a field where Charlotte had been operating a tractor. McCalister said she hid inside a shed behind a piece of equipment at Fred's instruction. Then Charlotte came to the shed.

"I heard them [Fred and Charlotte] up there talking, but I couldn't quite make it out, but it didn't last very long, and then I stayed behind the piece of equipment for a couple more minutes, and then I went outside, and when I went outside to where they was at, he had her on the ground and was strangling her."

"He strangled her to death," McCalister said.

McCalister then talked extensively about how she drove Charlotte's car, following Fred's pickup truck with Charlotte's body in a barrel in the back, to Terre Haute, where the car was abandoned.

McCalister then said she got in the truck with Fred, who drove first to her trailer near Rosedale, where Fred removed Charlotte's clothes. The body was then taken to a location "out in the boonies. I don't know exact address."

At that location and another, "down by South Lake, by the [Wabash] river," Charlotte's re-



VICKIE McCALISTER
Tells grisly tale

maina were mostly incinerated, McCalister said.

She said Fred examined his dead wife's skull.

The skull and the barrel went into the river, McCalister said.

Other remains were placed in a smaller barrel, then taken to a cabin, and then close to the river, where the incineration continued during a second night and the remains and smaller barrel also were thrown in the river, McCalister said.

McCalister said Fred Grabbe told her three or four times "That if I said anything to anybody, that I would end up missing like Charlotte did."

"Why did he — is there some reason he was concerned about everything burning up?" Coughlin asked.

"Yes. He said that she had had some kind of feet surgery or something, and he didn't want anybody to be able to detect it," McCalister said.

Coughlin asked, "Did Fred tell you why he killed her?"

"She was just giving him a bunch of trouble. I don't know exactly all the details. Mostly over money and the divorce going through," McCalister said.

Grabbe's defense attorneys have said McCalister's statement is a lie made up in hopes of getting a \$20,000 reward.

The prosecution says the unusual — perhaps even unlikely — elements in it tend to substantiate the statement. If a person were going to make up a story, it would be cleaner and more simple, David W. Lewis, Clark County state's attorney, said.

State's star witness asks for release from Clark jail

MARSHALL, Ill. — The state's star witness against Fred B. Grabbe requested and obtained her release from jail Monday.

Vickie McCalister, 28, 219 N. Ninth St., West Terre Haute, says she saw Fred B. Grabbe strangle his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, Route 1, Marshall, to death July 24, 1981.

McCalister has been in custody for more than two months — but she asked that bail be set Monday, and 5th Judicial Circuit Judge Cas Bennett agreed and authorized her release on a \$25,000 re-

cognition bond — meaning no money had to be deposited.

McCalister is to remain within a 30-mile radius of Marshall, unless Bennett gives her permission to leave.

David W. Lewis, Clark County state's attorney, said he fears someone will now attempt to scare away or influence or injure McCalister.

"Maybe she thought a moving target's harder to hit — I don't know."

Perhaps she was just tired of being in jail, Lewis said.

Steven L. Garst, McCalister's attorney, refused all comment.

Grabbe posts \$302,500 bond

After posting a \$302,500 bond, Fred B. Grabbe, 45, was released from the Edgar County jail Saturday afternoon. The amount was 10 percent of a \$3 million bond set by 5th Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Komada.

Grabbe is charged with the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife Charlotte, 39, Route 1, Marshall. He allegedly incinerated her body in a 55-gallon drum after she was killed.

His trial is currently set for Feb. 26 in the Clark County Courthouse in Marshall.

Bond was posted at the Clark County Jail, where Grabbe formerly was housed, according to a spokesperson there. The bond was made by two certified checks, one for \$300,000, the other for \$2,500. Both were cashiers' checks from Casey National Bank.

A receipt was made out to Stanton Grotenhuis, trustee for the Fred Grabbe bond trust fund.

Grabbe's bond set at \$3 million

By John Halliday
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

MARSHALL, Ill. — The state's case against accused murderer Fred B. Grabbe, 45, is not so strong that he should be held without bond, 5th Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Komada ruled Wednesday.

Komada set bond for Grabbe at \$3 million.

Grabbe is charged with the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, Route 1, Marshall.

He allegedly incinerated her body in a 55-gallon drum after she was killed.

The remains supposedly were moved during two nights by putting the drum in the back of a pickup truck.

But Komada said Wednesday he had not heard any evidence that the bed of the truck was damaged, as might have happened from the intensely hot drum sitting on it. There might have been some normal wear-and-tear "incidental damage" that covered any burn

marks, or the fire in the barrel might have gone out — but that would be up to the jurors to decide, Komada said.

The judge also said it appeared from testimony that it would have been difficult if not impossible for Grabbe and Vickie McCalister — who has agreed to testify against Grabbe — to hit the drum into the truck without being burned.

McCalister might be able to explain that at trial — but that also is up to the jury to decide, Komada said. A 23-page statement implicating Grabbe which McCalister gave authorities still has not been made public.

Much of the testimony Wednesday covered graphic details of how human bodies are burned.

After court Wednesday, Lewis said he had given up on the prosecution's unsuccessful search for remaining parts of Charlotte Grabbe's body.

"There is no body of Charlotte Grabbe — there's no conclusive proof that Charlotte Grabbe is even dead," Cohen said in court.

State, defense continue debate on whether Grabbe gets bond

MARSHALL, Ill. — Testimony is scheduled to continue today at the Clark County Courthouse to determine whether bond should be set for accused murderer Fred S. Grabbe.

Grabbe, 45, is charged with the July 24, 1981, strangulation murder of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, Route 1, Marshall.

Grabbe's defense attorneys are attempting to show that the case against him is not so strong that he should continue to be held without bond.

Vickie McCalister, 22, 219 N. Ninth St., West Terre Haute, an alleged eyewitness to Charlotte

Grabbe's murder, may stand to collect \$20,000 for her assistance in the Grabbe case, according to court testimony.

But David W. Lewis, Clark County state's attorney, said that that reward was first established as a general one by Jennie D. Livvix, the Grabbes' married daughter, for information leading to the arrest and conviction of whomever took Charlotte Grabbe's life.

"A private investigator later 'signed in on' McCalister," Lewis said. He added that no reward has yet been paid.

In other court action, the

prosecution agreed with defense requests not to mention during Grabbe's Feb. 26 trial certain information — including reportedly offering Grabbe a lie-detector test, which he refused. Max Cohen, one of Grabbe's defense attorneys, has been seeking to move the trial out of Clark County because of pretrial publicity.

The two-day court session that began Thursday was to include arguments on that motion but the defense now wants to wait another two or three weeks before arguing the motion before 5th Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Kamada.

Jury selection starts for retrial

By Jody Ferris
Tribune-Star Correspondent

MARSHALL, Ill. — Jury selection began Monday in Clark County for the retrial of Fred Grabbe, 46, of Marshall on charges of conspiracy to escape, armed violence and aggravated battery in connection with a jail-break attempt from the Clark County Jail in July 1985.

Fifteen potential jurors were questioned, with 12 being excused for various reasons. The three remaining have not yet been accepted for jury duty. Prospective jurors were questioned in panels of four about their knowledge of any of the principals in the case, opinions, personal history and ability to reach a true verdict.

After potential jurors were questioned, Clark County State's Attorney David Lewis requested a

change of venue, saying he was concerned so many possible jurors had to be excused because they had already formed opinions.

Defense attorney Frederick Cohn disagreed, pointing out that five of those excused were let go for other reasons.

Judge Ralph Pearman, who presided at Grabbe's earlier trial on the same charges and who ruled it a mistrial Oct. 7, told Lewis to "talk to me later. We'll think about it."

Cohn requested that Grabbe be housed in the Clark County Jail rather than in Coles County to allow more time to prepare testimony, but Sheriff Dan Crumrin said he'd rather have Grabbe housed in Coles County for security reasons. Crumrin assured Cohn that ample time would be allowed each evening for him to confer with Grabbe, an arrangement Cohn accepted.

State lays groundwork in trial, showing Grabbe planned escape

By Jody Ferris
Tribune-Star Correspondent

MARSHALL, Ill. — Assistant attorney general Matthew Schneider said Thursday that evidence would show that without Fred Grabbe's planning and assistance, his former girlfriend, Barbara Graham, would never have acted to break him out of jail on July 7, 1985.

The trial of Grabbe, 48, of Marshall for conspiracy to escape, aggravated battery and armed violence began Thursday in Marshall.

Graham pleaded guilty but mentally ill to one count of armed violence in 1986 and received a 16-year sentence.

Grabbe's defense attorney,

Frederick Cohn, said Graham had a motive behind "the hare-brained scheme" to break Grabbe out of jail and had a reason to lie about Grabbe's alleged involvement in the plan — the threat of charges being filed against her brother.

Clark County Sheriff's Deputy Sharon Davison, one of six prosecution witnesses, said Grabbe asked to be let out of deadlock at midnight, because he was going to have a "spell" and needed to walk for one or two hours.

Grabbe remained out of deadlock until 1:23 a.m. when, over his strong objections, she told him he had to be locked up. She then radioed Deputy Mike Davidson to come in.

When Davidson arrived 10 to 15 minutes later, Grabbe was calling for Davidson on the intercom.

When she started to the cellblock, she saw Graham come to the outside door, waving a letter. Davidson went to the door while Davison went to the radio.

Three gunshots were fired when the door was opened, Davidson said. Two more shots were fired during the ensuing struggle between Davidson and Graham and the second bullet went through her pants leg.

When she later searched Graham, Davison found a packet with money and four bullets. She also identified a .38-caliber handgun as the weapon Graham had in her possession.

Davidson told the jury that Graham raised a gun when he opened the door. The gun went off when he reached for it and the first shot struck him in the leg.

Woman agreed to free Grabbe

By Jody Ferris
Tribune-Star Correspondent

MARSHALL, Ill. — Fred Grabbe's ex-companion testified Friday that she agreed to help free him from Clark County Jail five days before his attempted escape failed.

Testimony of Barbara Graham dominated the second day of Grabbe's trial for conspiracy to escape, aggravated battery and attempted violence.

Grabbe, 48, of Marshall is accused of master-minding the failed escape from the Clark County Jail staged by Graham on July 7, 1985.

Graham pleaded guilty but mentally ill to one count of armed violence in 1984, and is serving a 16-year prison term. Graham testified that she agreed to help Grabbe during a visit to the jail July 2, 1985, and that he told her to go to various friends and family members to get a gun and ammunition, money and a car with supplies.

Graham said Grabbe used a secret language in letters and phone calls to give her instructions from the jail.

Graham said she became involved with Grabbe in 1984 when she was 25 and he was 45.

"Fred treated me very good," she testified. "He offered to buy me a place to live. He bought me a trailer in Marshall. He bought a waterbed and clothes and gifts for my kids. He paid the bills. He asked me to quit my job as an aerobics instructor to be with him."

"One day we flew a private plane to Kentucky for dinner," she testified. "Once we flew to Alabama for a week. He treated me like a lady."

Graham said she agreed to help Grabbe to escape because she loved him and because he had promised they would go away together and send for her children later.

Graham described the jailbreak attempt at 2 a.m. July 7, 1985,

saying Grabbe had given her step-by-step instructions. The attempt failed when Graham was surprised by Sheriff's Deputy Mike Davidson, who was shot during the ensuing struggle.

Defense attorney Fredrick Cohn tried to discredit Graham during cross examination, questioning discrepancies between her testimony Thursday and testimony given Oct. 1, during Grabbe's first trial on jailbreak charges.

Cohn also tried to link Graham's claim that Grabbe was involved in the jailbreak scheme to possible charges against her younger brother for involvement in the plan. Under questioning by Cohn, Graham admitted phoning Grabbe at the jail on June 27, 1985. She said the phone call concerned furniture she wanted to remove from the trailer Grabbe had bought her.

Graham acknowledged that until her testimony Thursday, neither Clark County State's Attorney David Lewis nor Illinois assistant attorney general Matthew Schneider, who is prosecuting the case against Grabbe, knew of the phone call.

Graham also answered, "I don't remember," to many questions concerning a lengthy interview July 11, 1985, during which she first implicated Grabbe in the jailbreak plan.

Cohn asked Graham "How is a two-hour interview different from talks with Fred which you remember with such clarity?"

Graham said, "When Fred told me something, it meant a lot to me."

Before Graham testified, an Illinois crime-scene technician and a retired Illinois crime investigator testified that the gun used by Graham in the jailbreak attempt was the same gun found in Charlotte Grabbe's car in 1981, and returned to Fred Grabbe in 1982.

Grabbe is awaiting retrial on charges of murdering his wife Charlotte in 1981.

Prosecution finishes its case against Grabbe in jailbreak trial

By Jody Ferris
Tribune-Star Correspondent

MARSHALL, Ill. — The prosecution rested its case Monday in the trial of Fred Grabbe, 48, of Marshall on charges related to an attempted break from the Clark County Jail on July 7, 1985.

Chief prosecution witness Barbara Graham, who attempted to break Grabbe out of jail and is serving a 16-year prison term for armed violence, underwent cross examination for most of the morning.

Defense attorney Frederick Cohn continued his attempt to throw doubt on Graham's credibility. She said she had not considered impor-

tant a phone call she made to Grabbe in jail on June 27, 1985, which was not known to the prosecution until her testimony Friday.

Graham also said that, in the week before the jailbreak attempt, she had "partied a lot" because she did not want to think about what she had been asked to do — break Grabbe out of jail.

Graham said she had not drunk alcohol or smoked marijuana on July 6, the day before the attempted jailbreak.

After Graham testified, Clark County Sheriff Dan Crumrin said he conducted a search of the car belonging to Inez Grabbe, Fred Grabbe's mother, on July 10, 1985. Graham said Grabbe had arranged to use the car in the escape.

The car was found abandoned on a rural road on July 8, 1985. In the car, Crumrin found a suitcase containing men's and women's clothing, Grabbe's wallet, ammunition and a letter from Grabbe to Graham.

Crumrin also testified that results of fingerprinting by a state crime lab in late September 1987 of two boxes of ammunition showed four latent fingerprints and a palm print. None of the prints matched those of Graham, Crumrin or Richard Tingley, who testified earlier he had bought the ammunition for a friend.

The friend, who reportedly provided Graham with ammunition for the jailbreak attempt, has not agreed to be fingerprinted, Crumrin said.

Grabbe denies assertions he planned jailbreak try

By Jody Ferris
Tribune-Star Correspondent

MARSHALL, Ill. — Taking the stand in his own defense Tuesday, Fred Grabbe denied suggesting to, or arranging for, former girlfriend Barbara Graham to break him out of jail while he was awaiting sentence for the 1981 murder of his wife, Charlotte.

He also denied arranging for Graham to get a gun, ammunition, money and a getaway car.

The case is expected to go to the jury following closing arguments and instructions today.

Grabbe is on trial for attempted jailbreak from the Clark County Jail.

Graham, who is serving a 16-year prison term for attempting to break Grabbe out of jail July 7, 1985, testified earlier in the trial that Grabbe had masterminded the scheme.

Grabbe said his late mother, Inez

Grabbe, first told him of Graham's plan to break him out of jail on June 29, 1985, and that he told his mother: "The whole concept is insane; ridiculous. Tell Barb to forget it."

Grabbe said his mother agreed to relay his message to Graham and that he told Graham on July 2, 1985, that "I had an appeal going, and this could mess up the whole thing. I told her it was absurd, and to forget it."

Graham left the jail that day after giving him the impression that she would do so, Grabbe said, adding that he did not discuss a jailbreak attempt again until July 8, when his mother again told him Graham was still planning to break him out.

Grabbe said Graham came into the visitor's booth in the jail while his mother was there and said she was going to break him out that night. Grabbe said he told Graham to forget it, and told his mother, "Get Barb stopped."

Grabbe said the "stuff" referred to in letters he wrote Graham from jail was actually a stereo, a camera and costume jewelry he had bought her and wanted her to have. He also said references to a trip Graham was planning were about a weekend trip to Indiana Beach — not an escape plan with him as Graham claimed.

Before Grabbe's testimony, a self-described "very good friend" of his, Estel Whitaker, testified he had given Grabbe's wallet found in a suitcase in the getaway car to Inez Grabbe after conviction, and that "Fred Grabbe never discussed Barbara Graham breaking him out of jail with me."

Pat Wright, former Marshall ambulance coordinator, testified that, after the jailbreak attempt July 7, Graham told her, "Don't let them tell Fred what I've done."

Wright also said she asked Graham if Grabbe had known of the attempt, and Graham had said no.

Grabbe hears not-guilty verdicts

By Jody Ferris
Tribune-Star Correspondent

MARSHALL, Ill. — Fred Grabbe, 48, of Marshall, on trial for conspiracy to escape, armed violence and aggravated battery, was found innocent of all three charges Wednesday.

The charges were in connection with a jailbreak attempt from the Clark County Jail on July 7, 1985, staged by Grabbe's former girlfriend, Barbara Graham. At the time, Grabbe was awaiting sentencing for the 1981 murder of his wife, Charlotte.

Graham, the chief prosecution witness

against Grabbe, is serving a 16-year prison term for armed violence.

The verdict was reached at 8:18 p.m. after the jury deliberated for several hours. Closing arguments by both attorneys lasted most of the morning with Judge Ralph Pearman's instructions to the jury of six men and six women at 12:30 p.m.

Following the verdict, Grabbe turned and embraced defense attorneys Frederick Cohn and Larry Jones and a nephew who had attended the entire trial.

The nephew reported later that Grabbe told him, "Jim, it's over."

After the verdict was announced, Cohn said:

volunteers had been out earlier in the day.

exposed materials with dirt.

"We had faith in the jurors of this county. That opinion has been demonstrated to be true. Barbara Graham was shown to be an unbelievable witness and, in the next trial, Vickie McCalister will be just as unbelievable. Fred is elated."

Clark County State's Attorney David Lewis, who assisted Illinois assistant attorney general Matthew Schneider in prosecuting the case, said: "The defense was successful in directing attention away from the letters Grabbe had written. The verdict does not affect plans for Grabbe's murder trial, which will take place after the first of the year, most likely here in Marshall."

Girlfriend tries to free Grabbe in shooting spree

MARSHALL, Ill. — A shooting early Sunday in the Clark County Jail has resulted in a woman — identified as Fred Grabbe's girlfriend — being jailed on a charge of attempted murder. Clark County Sheriff's Department officials said she was trying to help Grabbe escape.

Barbara Graham, 26, of Marshall and also said to be from the West Union and Huttonville area, was in the Clark County Jail on Sunday night on a preliminary charge of attempted murder. Sheriff Department spokesman

Dennis Durnai said other charges are pending. Bond has not been set.

Grabbe recently was convicted of murdering his estranged wife, Charlotte. He is in the Clark County Jail on \$5 million bond awaiting appeal of his conviction.

Graham reportedly pulled a .38-caliber weapon in the jail about 1:45 a.m. Sunday after persuading a deputy to open the office door. She had shown him a letter for Grabbe.

After Deputy Mike Davidson opened the door, Graham reportedly pulled the gun and Davidson

tried to rush her. She allegedly fired five shots, wounding Davidson in the leg and hip with the first two.

Davidson's wounds were minor. He was taken to Terre Haute Regional Hospital and later released.

Also involved in the fracas was dispatcher Sharon Davison, who was not wounded but did get a bullet through one of her trouser legs.

"We have got holes all over the place," Durnai said.

Fred was looking to next kill: Vicki

By John Halladay
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

DANVILLE, Ill. — Fred B. Grabbe said he was looking forward to the torture-slaying of his next victim, Vickie McCalister testified Thursday during Grabbe's murder trial.

Grabbe, 46, is charged with the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, of Route 1, Marshall.

McCalister says she saw Grabbe perform the crime and later burn Charlotte's body.

On the witness stand Thursday, McCalister said Grabbe told her later that "he couldn't wait for the next time" to torture a person and draw out that person's death more

than he did his wife's.

McCalister said Grabbe told her he wished he could have taken more time to kill Charlotte, "so he could have some fun with her." The defendant wanted to hang his wife and "watch her kick," McCalister said.

McCalister said Grabbe told her he had previously thought up several different ways of disposing of his wife, including cutting her up with a meat cutter and letting the pigs eat the remains, or putting her body in a smelter.

Grabbe discarded both of those plans because there might be traces left, and "the one he was gonna go with" was to have someone kill her and leave her body by her car, McCalister said.

Fred killed three others, she claims

DANVILLE, Ill. — Fred B. Grabbe, charged with murdering his wife and burning her body, also claimed to have killed three other people, according to Grabbe's chief accuser.

Grabbe, 46, is charged with the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, of Route 1, Marshall.

Star prosecution witness Vickie McCalister testified Thursday that — alone with Grabbe in a gully as he burned his wife's body in a barrel — the defendant talked about the earlier crimes.

McCalister said Grabbe told her that, at about age 14, he had "killed a guy who'd killed his dog," and that at another date he and another man were "out of town," and "killed these two women in this house."

McCalister was vague about details, but the alleged second event "had something to do with a

union or something."

Max Cohen, one of Grabbe's defense attorneys, objected that McCalister's testimony was "extremely prejudicial" and without any corroboration.

David W. Lewis, Clark County state's attorney, said the claims of additional crimes by Grabbe were part of a plan to intimidate McCalister and say, "This is the type of man I am, and you better not mess with me."

Fifth Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Komada said that why McCalister waited so long to go to authorities about Charlotte Grabbe's death was part of the case. The issue was not whether Grabbe committed the additional crimes, but whether he said he committed them to intimidate McCalister, Komada said. He allowed jurors to hear that portion of McCalister's testimony, then read them a cautionary instruction.

Grabbe didn't like her: Agent

By John Halladay
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

DANVILLE, Ill. — Fred B. Grabbe, accused of the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, said after her disappearance "he didn't like her but didn't want any harm to come to her," according to the state agent in charge of the Grabbe case.

Larry Coughlin, an agent with the division of criminal investigation of the Illinois Department of Law Enforcement, testified Monday that he interviewed Grabbe the day after Charlotte disappeared.

Grabbe said that, on the day of the alleged crime, he and Vickie McCalister decided to go to what Fred described as her trailer north of Terre Haute and that they stopped by a tool shed where Charlotte allegedly was strangled to get a burn barrel, Coughlin testified.

Charlotte came up to the shed on a tractor, Fred told Vickie to hide in his truck, and Fred and Charlotte argued, Coughlin said. Fred Grabbe told him

Fred said he, apparently with Vickie, then left, that Charlotte pursued in her car, and that Charlotte made a rude gesture before she turned off and Fred went on in the trailer, Coughlin testified.

Coughlin said Fred told him

Charlotte was "just playing a game," and that she had left and returned on other occasions.

Other prosecution witnesses have testified they had never known Charlotte to run away before.

During cross-examination by Max Cohen, one of Grabbe's defense attorneys, Coughlin agreed Grabbe offered investigators the use of his truck to check an area where he had been mowing — according to the prosecution, mowing that may have been done to cover up evidence of where he had been.

Two other witnesses testified Monday they each saw Fred's truck followed by Charlotte's car. The car, according to Dorothy Dixon and Warren Horsley, was being driven not by Charlotte, a blonde, but by a blond woman.

McCalister claims she drove Charlotte's car to Terre Haute at Grabbe's request. On the witness stand last week, McCalister had hair that some would call light brown and others would say was blonde. Reportedly, her hair was of a darker shade at the time of the crime.

She also said Grabbe told her to wear a red bandanna, but neither witness recalled seeing a bandana or a barrel in the back of Fred's truck.

Horsley said he saw a bulky object — like a tarp or a box — in the front seat of the truck.

Grabbe a familiar name in county

By John Halladay
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

MARSHALL, Ill. — News accounts about accused murderer Fred B. Grabbe have made his name familiar to nearly every household in Clark County, and ~~considerable~~ hostility exists toward him, according to a public-opinion survey.

Grabbe, 45, is charged with strangling his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, Route 1, Marshall, on July 24, 1981.

The survey was conducted Dec. 7-17 by Indiana State University students working under the guidance of William H. Harader, director of the ISU Center for Governmental Services. The survey was part of a successful strategy by Grabbe's attorneys to move the trial away from the Marshall area.

Harader testified Friday that Grabbe is "one of the best-known people in Clark County — third behind (former Rep.) Dan Crane and (former vice presidential candidate) Geraldine Ferraro."

Of those who offered an opinion, "most people have a negative attitude toward Mr. Grabbe," Harader said. He reported 96 percent said Grabbe either "definitely" or "probably" is guilty.

Of the 16,913 people living in Clark County according to the 1980 census, 10,846 were registered voters for the 1984 election and thus eligible for jury duty. Harader said 666 of those people were contacted for the poll. People were chosen at random, he said, adding

that the results of the poll should be viewed as accurate to plus or minus 4 percent.

Harader's report also contained a section of "impressions," extra comments people offered.

Those impressions showed many people fear Grabbe, and "there is an underlying hostility toward outsiders like Indians State University and, perhaps, Max Cohen," a defense attorney for Grabbe from Merrillville, Ind., the report said.

One person who refused to participate in the survey said, "We can handle our own business."

Hostile comments included one from another person, who told the telephone interviewer, "They ought to electrocute him. I wish I could be on the jury."

Fifty-six percent of the people claimed to have no opinion on whether Fred Grabbe killed his wife. Yet in answer to a similar question, 44 percent said they could put their opinion aside and decide the case only on the evidence presented.

Both the prosecution and defense focused on those two questions and responses.

Ellen Schanzle-Haskins, an assistant Illinois attorney general helping Clark County State's Attorney David Lewis present the case, said the responses to the questions showed a good chance existed of getting a fair jury.

But Cohen said the difference between the two sets of responses showed that people were really hiding their hostile opinions.

The cost of the survey was "just under \$5,000," according to Harader, who said his own fee was \$1,000.

Judge takes other actions

MARSHALL, Ill. — In addition to moving the trial of Fred B. Grabbe to Danville, Ill., and rescheduling it for April 15, 5th Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Komada took several other actions Friday relating to the Grabbe case:

- Komada granted a defense motion to have trial at the same time and place for Grabbe for allegedly trying to get a Clark County Jail inmate to give false testimony about supposed marijuana use by Vickie McCalister, the prosecution's star witness.

Max Cohen, one of Grabbe's defense attorneys, requested the two cases be heard at the same time. Otherwise, he said prosecutors would get two chances to convict Grabbe. Cohen also said a single trial would save time and money.

- Komada gave Grabbe more freedom to travel while out on bail. The judge said Grabbe would be allowed to go to Indiana to tend to business interests in Vigo and Sullivan counties, and to meet with

Cohen and live near Cohen's Merrillville, Ind., office if Grabbe chooses.

David Lewis, Clark County state's attorney, objected, saying he feared for the safety of some of the witnesses including McCalister, who lives in Vigo County. Komada said Grabbe could only be in Vigo County between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. unless he gets special judicial permission.

- Komada was given a copy of a prosecution motion requesting a hearing to determine the source of the \$300,000 bail Grabbe posted on the murder charge. The prosecution's motion says that, just the day before Grabbe got out on bond, he claimed not to have enough money, and "it is highly unlikely that the defendant's financial condition could change in one day's time."

The motion suggests something is fishy and the court should "make an inquiry into the adequacy of the source" of the money.

— John Halladay

Grabbe trial site changed

By John Holladay
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

MARSHALL, Ill. — Trial for accused murderer Fred B. Grabbe will begin on April 15 in Danville, 5th Judicial Circuit Judge Paul Komada ruled Friday.

Grabbe, 45, is charged with the July 24, 1981, strangulation of his estranged wife, Charlotte, 39, Route 1, Marshall.

Komada made the ruling after defense attorneys for Grabbe presented testimony about media reports dealing with the Grabbe case and a public-opinion survey of local residents.

Vermilion County was chosen to get the trial because the Danville Commercial-News has not publicized the trial, according to court testimony. Even the judges in Vermilion County had not heard about the trial, Komada said.

Komada said Friday that court exhibits showed the case has

generated a "tremendous amount of press attention", from other papers. As many as eight to 10 reporters for local media attended earlier court hearings, and the courtroom was sometimes filled to capacity with spectators, he said.

Had the trial remained in Marshall, Komada said, 500 prospective jurors might have had to be summoned to get an impartial jury. The extra cost to Clark County taxpayers would have been several thousand dollars.

While there may be earlier court proceedings, the next established court date is April 4, when any additional motions will be argued in the Clark County Courthouse.

Next, participants will head for Danville to begin selection of jurors on April 15.

At some point during the trial, jurors will be brought back to the Marshall area to view the scene of the alleged murder, prosecutors said.

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